Plan of Action
2005-2006

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
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Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Message from Minister

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women's business plan continues to build on accomplishments of the past years, to provide research and policy advice to shape public policy that is responsive to the needs of women in Nova Scotia.

In the coming year, the Council will continue its work to encourage more women to enter political life. They will work to formulate sound recommendations in the many issues related to women's economic security, with particular attention to those most disadvantaged in the labour market. The prevention of violence against women remains an important item on the Council's agenda. Health and well-being of women and their families will be addressed with particular attention to prevention in the fields of HIV/AIDS and addictions, as well as the rising needs of caregivers.

The Council continues to meet or exceed its outcome measures, and has raised the bar for some of them, while sharpening and refining other measures.

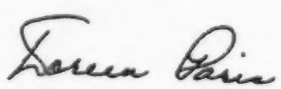
I look forward to Council's advice and contributions in the coming year.

Carolyn Bolivar-Getson
Minister responsible for the administration of the *Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act*

Message from Chair

As my term as Chair of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women draws to a close, I am pleased to present the business plan for the upcoming fiscal year.

The Council members and staff are dedicated to the mission of advancing equality, fairness and dignity for all women. In our opinion, this business plan will further that mission in the coming year, and shape government policies and programs that touch the lives of women throughout Nova Scotia.



Doreen Paris

Chair

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

1.0 Mandate and Mission

The mandate of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women derives from the statute establishing the Council. Section 4(1) requires the Council to advise the Minister and to bring forward the concerns of women in Nova Scotia. Section 4(2) defines the powers of the Council, which may:

- receive and hear petitions and suggestions concerning the status of women
- undertake and recommend research on matters relevant to the status of women
- recommend and participate in programs concerning the status of women
- propose legislation, policies and practices to promote equality of opportunity and status
- publish reports, studies and recommendations

Mission

- To advance equality, fairness and dignity for all women in Nova Scotia

1.1 Planning Context

The Journey Continues: Stepping Stones to Equality

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women remains, as it always has been, an organization that spans boundaries, that builds bridges, between communities, all orders of government, and academic institutions. Those bridges are built for all women, with a particular focus on social inclusion and cultural diversity. The keystone is our people–dedicated Council members, high-performance staff and trusted partners in community and government. These relationships make it possible to advance equality, fairness and dignity for all women.

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women continues to make progress through a wide range of partnerships with communities, governments and academic groups and institutions.

The highlight of the Council's year was Atlantic Canada's first Campaign School for Women in Politics. In partnership with Mount Saint Vincent University, and with the generous participation of many women whose political careers make them role models, thirty women took part in an active, hands-on weekend program that met or exceeded their expectations. The Council's ongoing commitment to increasing the number of women engaged in public affairs was well-illustrated by this event. The Advisory Council plans to work with the other Atlantic Provinces to ensure that this program can be regularly offered.

The high quality of our Policy and Research work is beginning to achieve national and international recognition, with work on Gender Statistics and Indicators being presented to the OECD World Forum on Key Indicators on behalf of the country. We were pleased to contribute

to the visiting delegation from Eastern Cape Province in the Republic of South Africa, who had expressed particular interest in the policy recommendations brought forward in the Council's report *Building Transitions to Good Jobs for Low-Income Women.* The F/P/T Forum of Status of Women Ministers accepted the report *Policy Options to Support Dependent Care: The Tax/Transfer System.* That report was produced by the Healthy Balance Research Program, an increasingly productive partnership including the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health and the University of Ottawa as co-directors with the Advisory Council. Continued funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research makes this innovative collaboration possible.

Advisory Council publications and information resources are a valued contribution to both government and community users. Our web site allows us to reach out and link to many policy and community audiences. A new publication designed for and with young women will be released early in 2005 to address the numerous issues and life choices confronting them. In Amherst, the Advisory Council on the Status of Women partnered with Eastlink and the Cumberland African Nova Scotian Association to produce and disseminate a documentary on the historical contributions of African Nova Scotian women. In Annapolis, a fruitful partnership with area women's centres resulted in release of a report on the pension situation of older women. Media coverage of council events and views was positive throughout the year.

Within the Province, the Advisory Council has strong working relationships that contribute to the consideration of gender issues as an explicit part of the policy development and program design process. While gender mainstreaming and gender-based analysis have been contributions of Council over the years, future efforts will focus on more systematic approaches to ensure that gender issues are explicitly addressed and opportunities for contributing to the strategic goals of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women are realized. One such opportunity lies in the implementation of Nova Scotia's immigration strategy. Further opportunities arise in connection with the development of Early Childhood Learning and Care, in health promotion activities, in development of an elder abuse strategy, and in addressing issues related to women's participation in trades and technology occupations.

Women in Nova Scotia continue to face many challenges:

- They have only 6 of 52 seats in the provincial legislature and about 25% of municipal council seats; their representation on agencies, boards and commissions has declined rather than increased.

- Race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and other grounds of discrimination intersect with gender to multiply disadvantage; for example, recent immigrant women are almost twice as likely as native-born to have at least one university degree, yet they are almost twice as likely to be unemployed . Aboriginal women's disadvantaged economic situation is reflected in poor health status relative to other Nova Scotian women. The

difficulties of women with disabilities in finding employment need serious attention in any employment strategy for workers with disabilities.

- Violence against girls and women in all its forms is highly prevalent in the province. The Council is struggling with emerging social norms around sexuality and the objectification of women, of an apparently insatiable appetite for violent pornography and new ways of its dissemination. The constant barrage of negative messages in film, television, the Internet, videos and print media undermines the capacity to build resilience, empowerment and self-esteem among women, leaving them vulnerable to abuse and open to perpetrating it.

- The rising proportion of precariously-employed workers particularly affects women, resulting in almost half not being eligible for Employment Insurance based benefits for maternity leave, parental leave and compassionate care leave. Similarly, precarious employment results in limited pension eligibility and payouts for women, with serious consequences for older women, especially for those who are unattached. In 2000, 39% of unattached female seniors were living below the low-income cut-offs compared to 25% of senior men.

- The demographic crisis of Nova Scotia arises from the fact that the birth rate in Nova Scotia has been well below replacement level since the mid-70s. Higher education and career commitments of women have contributed to this dearth of children. However, key reasons why so many women and men are unable to fulfill their hopes and aspirations for larger families is simply that they cannot afford more than one or two children. The low availability of quality Early Childhood Learning and Care, and its high cost, are major contributors to this situation. The Edwardian breadwinner model of the family will not provide for a social policy framework that suits the radically changed social and economic environment of Nova Scotia, and indeed the world.

Two major challenges confront the Advisory Council on the Status of Women:

- to maintain a coherent approach to the multiplicity of issues referred to us by government and community.;

- to improve our visibility in all parts of Nova Scotia

The Council's response and approach to these challenges will be to maintain and build capacity with our many partners. The priorities presented below reflect the direction of the Advisory Council members in a manner consistent with our accountabilities as detailed in our program logic (See Logic Model).

2.0 Strategic Goals

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

The members of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women have defined the following strategic goals for the work of the agency:

Inclusion and Participation

- To increase the participation of women in all their diversity in decisions that affect their lives, families, and communities, with particular emphasis on those who face discrimination because of race, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or various forms of family status.

The goal of inclusion addresses government priorities in areas of cultural diversity and the social inclusion of all Nova Scotians. **It is the policy of the Advisory Council of the Status of Women that this goal will be an overarching one for all the Council's work. No projects or initiatives will be undertaken without a consideration of the ways in which social inclusion and cultural diversity are addressed.**

Economic Equality

- To promote women's economic equality

Women's participation in the full range of education, training and occupational opportunities is an integral part of building a learning culture, greater prosperity, and supporting families and Nova Scotians in need within a context of fiscal responsibility and accountability.

An important initiative in the coming year will be to partner with members of the Departments of Education and Community Services, Nova Scotia Community College, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the Hypatia Group and the Women for Economic Equality Society in order to increase the exposure and participation of women in trades and technology occupations which still are exceptional careers for women.

Personal Safety and Freedom from Violence

- To reduce violence against women in communities, workplaces and families

Safer communities and streets are a priority of government. The Council's information and education activities related to violence against women support this priority through primary prevention and assisting women affected by violence in all its forms in getting the help they need.

Health and Well-Being

- To improve the health and well-being of women and their families

Council continues to partner with the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health in the Canadian Institutes for Health Research-funded Healthy Balance Research Program. The research will demonstrate the connections between women's paid work and unpaid caregiving on the one hand, and their health status on the other. Furthermore, opportunities for effective policy and program interventions to assist caregivers will be identified and communicated to relevant target audiences. Four Equity Reference Groups–African-Nova Scotian women, Mi'kmaq women, immigrant women and women with disabilities–are partners in this program, in the definition of research questions, the research process itself, and the interpretation and dissemination of research outcomes to both policy and community audiences.

3.0 Core Business Areas

1. Policy & Research

Advises Minister on concerns and priorities of women, and formulates strategies and options to address these. Conducts quantitative and qualitative research in consultation with academic and community groups and government departments to ensure advice is a feasible, relevant, timely and accurate guide to governmental action.

2. Information & Education

Collects and disseminates information on women's issues to Minister, Council, staff, and other key stakeholders including media and the general public. Through a comprehensive communications strategy, informs and influences key stakeholders about issues and concerns affecting women, and about Council and government priorities, activities, accomplishments and opportunities for improvement in addressing women's issues.

3. Community Liaison & Rural Outreach

Through the Council members and the Community Liaison and Rural Outreach Program, brings forward concerns of women from across Nova Scotia, with particular attention to disadvantaged groups. Partners with communities and agencies to advance equality for women in programs and services.

4.0 Priorities 2005/2006

Social Inclusion

- To increase the number and diversity of women participating in public and political life.
- To increase the visibility of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Economic Equality/Security

- To make recommendations to policy and community audiences to reduce women's precarious employment and poverty by, for example, disseminating the findings of the Transition to Employment for Low-Income Women report.
- To increase women's exposure to and participation in occupations where they are under-represented.

Personal Safety and Freedom from Violence

- To identify and recommend measures to prevent and reduce all forms of violence against women.

Health and Well-Being

- To contribute a gender-based focus to Nova Scotia's Health Promotion Strategy with an initial focus on HIV/AIDS, addictions, and gambling.
- To disseminate the findings of the Healthy Balance Research Program and make recommendations to policy and community audiences to support women in care-giving/care-receiving roles.

5.0 Budget Context

Estimated Budget Expenditures			
	Estimate 2004/05 (Per 2004/05 Estimates Book)	Forecast 2004/05 (Per 2004/05 Estimates Book)	Budget 2005/06 (Per 2005/06 Estimates Book)
	$Thousands	$Thousands	$Thousands
Total Program Expenses - Gross Current	$785.5	$774.4	$843.5
Net Program Expenses - Net of Recoveries	$756.0	$756.0	$834.0
Salaries and Benefits	$495.3	$455.5	$508.3
Funded Staff (FTEs)	7.8	6.9	8.0

6.0 Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology and Communications

Finance, Human Resources and Information Technology functions are carried out on behalf of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women by the Department of Justice CSU. This enables the Advisory Council to function with minimal expenditure for administrative overhead.

A communications advisor will continue to be assigned to the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, enabling effective communications support to the Minister, Council Chair, members and staff, and more systematic communications planning and implementation for all Council initiatives.

2005-2006 Performance Measures: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women				
Strategic Goal: Social Inclusion and Participation of Women in Decision-Making				
OUTCOME (immediate or intermediate)	**MEASURE**	**DATA Base Year (2001) and subsequent years**	**TARGET Year**	**Strategic Actions to Achieve Target**
The work of the Advisory Council addresses diversity and social inclusion	Proportion of Council's briefs, statistical publications, informational reports, etc., that address diversity and social inclusion	Year 01-02: * Year 02-03: * Year 03-04: * * baseline data to follow	2007: 75%	Review holdings of Advisory Council publications and recommendations database to establish baseline data. Consistently review Council products as they are developed for diversity/social inclusion content.
Increased public awareness of Council initiatives	Tracking of Council web-site visits	Year 01-02: 49,244 Year 02-03: 68,260 Year 03-04: 88,689	2007: 100,000	Maintain and enhance Council web-site, responding to identified information needs.
	Tracking number of speaking engagements of both Council members and staff, as well as audience size and location	n/a this is a new measure	2005-06: 10 2006-07: 20	This is a new measure to better track the public's awareness of the Council. A speaking engagements tracking form will be developed for Council members and staff to use. Support will be provided to Council members and staff in relation to speaking engagements. Mapping of Council's speaking engagements will be used to ensure a province-wide awareness is achieved.
	Tracking of media stories related to the work of the Advisory Council	Year 01-02: 45 Year 02-03: 46 Year 03-04: 33 (print media only)	2007: 50	Ensure public's awareness of Council events, accomplishments and positions through effective communications planning and actions.

2005-2006 Performance Measures: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women				
Strategic Goal: Social Inclusion and Participation of Women in Decision-Making				
OUTCOME (immediate or intermediate)	**MEASURE**	**DATA Base Year (2001) and subsequent years**	**TARGET Year**	**Strategic Actions to Achieve Target**
Increased number of Newsbytes subscribers	Track number of Newsbytes subscribers	Currently (Jan-05) there are 363 subscribers More detailed baseline data to follow.	2007-08: 1000 subscribers	Newsbytes is the Advisory Council's bi-weekly electronic news bulletin which has been in existence since April of 2002. Newsbytes replaced the Council's hard-copy newsletter and aims to inform subscribers of Council news, updates, and short features on women's issues. Through web-site redesign and consistent marketing, the Advisory Council plans to increase its number of Newsbytes subscribers to 1000 by 2007-08.

Performance Measures: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women				
Strategic Goal: Social Inclusion and Participation of Women in Decision-Making...continued				
OUTCOME (immediate or intermediate)	**MEASURE**	**DATA Include Base Year (2001) and subsequent year_**	**TARGET Year**	**Strategic Actions to Achieve Target**
Sustained effectiveness of Advisory Council	Council member quarterly self-ratings (1 to 10)	Year 01-02: 8.2 Year 02-03: 7.9 Year 03-04: 7.3 Year 04-05: 8.1* * First three quarters only	Year 05-06: 8.0 +	Conduct 2-day orientation for new Council members, including media training and public speaking.

Performance Measures: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women				
Strategic Goal: Social Inclusion and Participation of Women in Decision-Making...continued				
OUTCOME (immediate or intermediate)	**MEASURE**	**DATA Include Base Year (2001) and subsequent year_**	**TARGET Year**	**Strategic Actions to Achieve Target**
Increased numbers of Nova Scotian women obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in public and political life	Number of Women's Campaign School graduates	2004-05: 30 (25 from NS, 5 from out of province)	45 graduates every 4-year cycle	In 2004, the Advisory Council on the Status of Women developed and coordinated the first-ever Nova Scotia Campaign School for Women. The School, held in Halifax in November of 2004, had a total of 30 graduates who gained invaluable knowledge and the skills required to participate actively in public and political life. In 2005-06, the Council will initiate discussions with the Advisory Councils from the other Atlantic provinces with a view to developing an Atlantic campaign school to be hosted on a rotational basis.

Performance Measures: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women				
Strategic Goal: Economic Equality and Security of Women				
OUTCOME (immediate or intermediate)	**MEASURE**	**DATA Include Base Year (2001) and subsequent year_**	**TARGET Year**	**Strategic Actions to Achieve Target**
The advice, recommendations, and input that the Advisory Council makes in relation to gender, inclusion and diversity are valued and well-utilized by government and community partners in social and economic initiatives., eg. Women in Trades and Technology Initiative, Hypatia, Immigration Strategy, Social Policy, Community Development Initiative.	Government departments and community groups express satisfaction with Advisory Council's recommendations and inputs.	n/a This is a new measure	2005-06: 3.5 out of 5	Enhance Advisory Council's capacity to conduct gender-based analysis (GBA) through training and use of guided case-studies. Enhance the Advisory Council's Resource Centre holdings in relation to GBA, establishing a GBA Resource Centre for use by government policy and research staff. Advise on GBA activities in and outside government in order to promote a diversity-inclusive gender perspective throughout the work of government. Develop feedback form (5-point rating scale) to assess satisfaction of government departments and community groups with Advisory Council's recommendations and inputs.

Performance Measures: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women				
Strategic Goal: Personal Safety and Freedom from Violence for Women				
OUTCOME (immediate or intermediate)	**MEASURE**	**DATA Include Base Year (2001) and subsequent year_**	**TARGET Year**	**Strategic Actions to Achieve Target**
Strong utilization of policy-based research and informational resources developed and disseminated by the Advisory Council pertaining to personal safety and violence against women	Track utilization of *Making Changes* and other relevant resources	2001-02: 13,300 2002-03: 11,430 2003-04: 40,337 copies of *Making Changes* were either requested (hard copy) or downloaded from Council's website.		Reprint *Making Changes* as required Creation and maintenance of web-based resource on Nova Scotian sexual assault statistics. Update of *Family Violence and Personal Safety* upon release of 2004 General Social Survey data by Statistics Canada.

Performance Measures: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women				
Strategic Goal: Health and Well-Being of Women				
OUTCOME (immediate or intermediate)	**MEASURE**	**DATA Include Base Year (2001) and subsequent year_**	**TARGET Year**	**Strategic Actions to Achieve Target**
The advice, recommendations, and input that the Advisory Council makes in relation to gender, inclusion and diversity are valued and well-utilized by government and community partners in health and wellness initiatives., eg. Health Promotion Strategy, Healthy Balance Research Program, HIV/AIDS Strategy.	Government departments and community groups express satisfaction with Advisory Council's recommendations and inputs.	n/a This is a new measure	2005-06: 3.5 out of 5	Enhance Advisory Council's capacity to conduct gender-based analysis (GBA) through training and use of guided case-studies. Enhance the Advisory Council's Resource Centre holdings in relation to GBA, establishing a GBA Resource Centre for use by government policy and research staff. Advise on GBA activities in and outside government in order to promote a diversity-inclusive gender perspective throughout the work of government. Develop feedback form (5-point rating scale) to assess satisfaction of government departments and community groups with Advisory Council's recommendations and inputs.